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Breastfeeding and dietary habits

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Objective: To test whether there are differences in diversity in the diet of children still being partly breastfed at 9 months compared with those completely weaned at the same age.

Methods/Design: 312 healthy term infants with the age of 9 months (9.1 ± 0.3) were examined in a cross-sectional study (SKOT-cohort) in the area of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Results: The infants partly breastfed ($n=168$) at 9 months had a significantly lower bodyweight (<0.0001), were significantly shorter ($P=0.0022$), and were introduced to complementary foods significantly later than completely weaned infants ($n=141$) (<0.0001) of similar age (Fig. 1). Furthermore, they had a lower intake of energy, both in absolute amounts ($P<0.0001$) and analyzed per kilogram of bodyweight ($P=0.049$). A significantly lower intake of most energy yielding nutrients, in both absolute amounts and as energy percentages, was seen for the partly breastfed compared to the completely weaned infants. Only small differences were found for absolute intakes of foods, although fatty spread showed significantly higher intake rates and consumption ($P=0.0004$) among partly breastfed compared with completely weaned infants (Table 1).*

Table 1. Daily intakes of foods and drinks and percentages of consumers among 9-month-old partly breastfed and completely weaned infants (median, 25th and 75th percentiles)

| Food group | Intake | | | | P value* |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|---|----------|
| | Partly breastfed at 9 mo (n=168) | | Completely weaned at 9 mo (n=141) | | |
| | % consuming | Median (P ₂₅ , P ₇₅) | % consuming | Median (P ₂₅ , P ₇₅) | |
| <i>Drinks</i> | | | | | |
| Breast milk | 100 | 80 (80, 355) | 0 | - | <0.0001 |
| Formula | 48 | 0 (0, 114) | 92 | 377 (231, 477) | <0.0001 |
| Follow-on formula | 8 | 0 (0, 0) | 28 | 0 (0, 36) | <0.0001 |
| Cow milk (drinking) | 71 | 36 (0, 109) | 79 | 46 (5, 118) | <0.0001 |
| Juice/squash/soft drinks | 13 | 0 (0, 0) | 20 | 0 (0, 0) | 0.748 |
| <i>Foods</i> | | | | | |
| Porridge | 99 | | 99 | | |
| Homemade | 93 | 105 (47, 170) | 89 | 107 (43, 171) | 0.936 |
| Industrial | 48 | 0 (0, 43) | 53 | 11 (0, 64) | 0.026 |
| Fruit pure | 74 | | 82 | | |
| Homemade | 55 | 4.5(0, 29) | 58 | 7.1(0, 36) | 0.729 |
| Industrial | 47 | 0 (0, 21) | 55 | 7 (0, 36) | 0.0013 |
| Vegetable pure | 82 | | 81 | | |
| Homemade | 71 | 33 (0, 98) | 74 | 36 (0, 100) | 0.983 |
| Industrial | 35 | 0 (0, 17) | 40 | 0 (0, 25) | 0.267 |
| Bread | 96 | 23 (11, 39) | 98 | 26 (13, 39) | 0.074 |
| Fatty spread | 85 | 3 (1, 4) | 81 | 2 (0, 4) | 0.031 |
| Vegetables/veg. products | 99 | 35 (18, 55) | 99 | 33 (19, 57) | 0.918 |
| | | | | | |
| Fruit in pieces | 98 | 57 (28, 89) | 94 | 58 (30, 91) | 0.820 |
| Meat/meat products | 96 | 12 (5, 22) | 99 | 16 (7, 26) | 0.163 |
| Fish/fish products | 88 | 5 (2, 10) | 88 | 5 (2, 11) | 0.443 |

*Comparing breastfeeding groups adjusted for weight of the infant, mother's age, mother's education and number of persons in the household.

Conclusions: At 9 months the infants partly breastfed did not eat less diversified compared to those completely weaned at the same age. Despite later introduction to complementary foods than those completely weaned, their intake of foods was similar and no delay in their progression towards the family foods was noted.

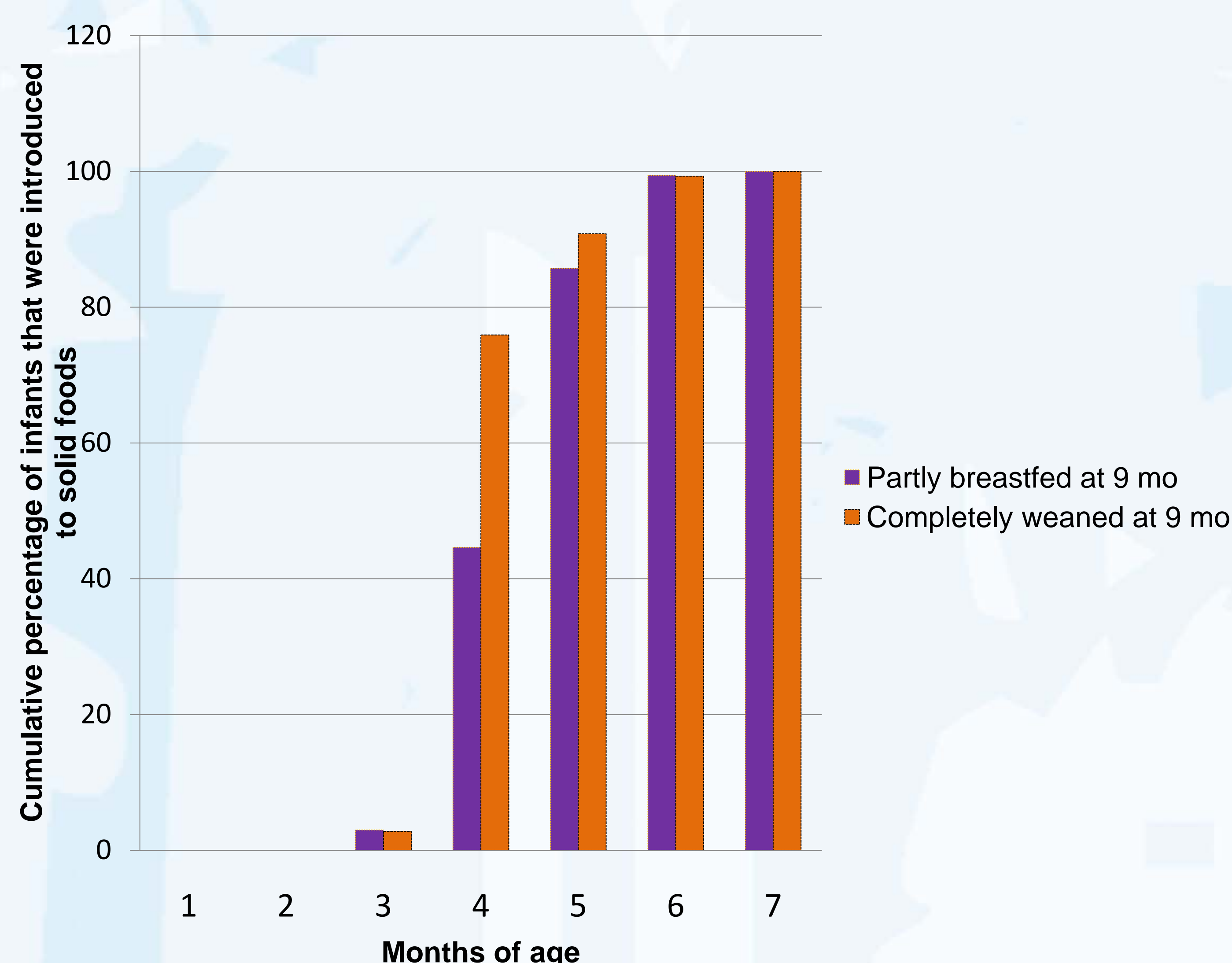


Fig. 1. Cumulative percentage of partly breastfed at 9 mo and completely weaned infants at 9 mo with introduction of complementary foods, per month.

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